

PRAYER AND CHARITY

Recommended in

Two Discourses :

The Former Preached at CHISWICK,
July 27, 1736.

The Latter at KENSINGTON,
Jan. 9, 1736-7.

For the Benefit of the *Charity Children*
belonging to that SCHOOL.

By THOMAS HARTLEY,
Curate of CHISWICK in MIDDLESEX.

*Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a
Memorial before GOD.* Acts x. 4.

L O N D O N :

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M. DCC. XXXVII.





To the Right Honourable

S P E N C E R,

Earl of W I L M I N G T O N,

Viscount *Pevensey*, Baron *Wilmington*,

Lord President of His M A J E S T Y's Most
Honourable Privy-Council, and

Knight of the most Noble Order of the *Garter*.

My L O R D,



Owever Dedications may have been
prostituted by some, to flatter the
Vanity of the Great, and, by this
Incense of Adulation, to gain Fa-
vour and Offerings to themselves ; yet all
must allow, that the true End and Design of
them is not only laudable but useful : And
this, my LORD, was doubtless to pay that

grateful Tribute of Respect and Commendation which is due to distinguish'd Merit and Excellence, and thereby to incite others to an Imitation of it : For though virtuous and great Attainments should be founded on more generous Principles than the Love of Praise, yet these, and these alone, have an unquestioned Title to it,

*Ut enim quisque est maximè boni particeps,
ita & laudabilis maximè.* Cic.

If this be the Case, Authors ought to be very careful in the Choice they make of Subjects for Panegyric, lest on one Hand, they incur the odious Imputation of Flattery, and on the other, expose those whom they officiously thought to commend. And herein, my LORD, I have so well succeeded, that whoever has the Honour to know You, will think it as difficult for me to say too much, as it is for others to deserve all that may, with Justice, be said of Your Lordship.

But it is not my Design here to write an Encomium on the Earl of WILMINGTON ; to attempt that, would be, in Effect, to suppose, either that the Publick was not sufficiently

ently acquainted with his Character; or that I could draw it to Advantage; but as the first would proclaim my Ignorance; so the latter would argue a vain Conceit of my own Abilities: Besides, were I equal to the Task, this single Reason would dissuade me from undertaking it, that I should please him least by praising him most;

*Nec enim minus considerandum est quid
Aures ejus pati possant quàm quod vir-
tutibus debeatur.* Plin.

Thus, my LORD, in respect to Your Modesty, I should forbear even doing Justice to Your Merits, and chuse rather to say less than You deserve, than offend You by saying more than You desire to hear.

But, to be quite silent on so copious a Subject would be most unpardonable, as it must be allow'd extremely difficult to know where to begin or when to have done, where Choice is divided by so equal a Competition in every Part: For when I consider Your Lordship's Character, I cannot but compare it to a State-ly Edifice of finish'd Workmanship, too large to be taken in at one View, and which, when
distinctly

distinctly survey'd, pleases most in that Part which last engages our Attention, where Preference is puzzl'd amidst Variety, because the various Parts of it do all equally contribute to the Beauty and Symmetry of the Whole, which is best describ'd, by saying, that it is compleat : So likewise, when we consider Your Lordship, whether in Your publick Capacity ; as how unaffected the Courtier, how unbiass'd the Statesman, how learned the Senator, how wise the Counsellor ; or in Your private Life, where the Gentleman and Scholar so well combine to form the agreeable Companion, and these three unite in the sincere Friend, we cannot but admire each single Quality, but most of all to see them blended together with such social Mixture in the Composition of a WILMINGTON.

But these, my LORD, I only mention as Heads for a more able Pen to enlarge on, and shall content myself with observing (which is another Part of Your Lordship's Character) that You have acquitted Yourself in the Discharge of the most important Offices of Authority and Trust, with the highest Abilities, and most approv'd Fidelity ; that Your Honours, though due to Your Noble Birth and
Qua-

Quality, are the Appendages of your Merit, and the Reward of Your publick Services; and though they are some of the greatest that a Sovereign can bestow, yet we must grant them unequal to the Desert of him that wears them, who rather ennobles than is ennobled by them, and outdoes the Generosity of his Prince by deserving more than he can reward.

There is still one Part of Your Lordship's Character behind, which, as it crowns and gives a double Lustre to the Whole, I must not pass over in Silence, I mean the *Christian*; Your Honours demand our Respect, Your other eminent Qualities deserve our Esteem, but this engages our Love, and endears You to us.

It is a melancholy Consideration, that Greatness and Goodness should not oftner meet together in the same Person, and that we should have any Reason to think it a rare Example, and worthy of a particular mention, where we find them so conjoyn'd: But thus, my LORD, it is; and glad we are, if we can boast a few such great Names as Your Lordship's to head our *Sion* against those Armies of Infidelity and Profaneness which are the Offspring of the present Age.

Age. Example has ever been accounted the most likely and successful Method of recommending Religion to the World; but where it is render'd conspicuous by being seated in an exalted Station, it has then a more extensive good Influence, and carries a kind of Authority with it.

We cannot then but form great Hopes of Success from so Illustrious a Pattern as that of Your Lordship: With Pleasure we behold Your firm Attachment to our Constitution, Ecclesiastical as well as Civil; and ought to express our great Satisfaction to see at the Head of the Council so Able a Statesman, so True a Churchman, so Faithful a Minister to his Prince, and so Hearty a Friend of the People.

That Your Lordship may long live a Shining Example in each of these honourable and glorious Relations, is, or ought to be, the Prayer of every one that wishes well to our Religion and our Country; as it is of no one more sincerely than

Your LORDSHIP'S Dutiful,

and most Obedient Servant,

*Chiswick,
April 20, 1737.*

Thomas Hartley.



[1]
THE
PRAYER
OF
JABEZ.

I Chron. iv. 10.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Ob! that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my Coast, and that thine Hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested.



HO this *Jabez* was that put up this Prayer to God, as to his particular Office and Character, is not specify'd, there not being, as far as I can find, any mention made of him in any Part of the Sacred History, save only in this Chapter, and here but in the eighth and ninth Verses of it: That he was of the Tribe
B of

of *Judah* appears from his having a Place among his Descendents; and probable it is, that he was the Head of a Family, and a Person of some Eminence and Distinction in his Tribe; for we read in the preceding Verse, that he was more honourable than his Brethren, which may imply, either, that he was a martial Man, and famous for his Exploits and warlike Deeds, or a Person of great Piety and Sanctity of Life, and in consequence thereof, honour'd of God with some peculiar Mark of the Divine Favour; and this seems the more probable Conjecture of the two, on Account of the Instance of his Devotion recorded in the Text, and the Success which attended it, *for God granted him that which he requested.* If we may be allow'd to determine any Thing probable concerning the Time when he liv'd, it was most likely betwixt the Settling of the Children of *Israel* in the Land of Promise, and the Commencement of their Form of Government by Judges. That he lived after the first Period of Time assign'd, is plain from the Words of his Prayer, Part of which is, *that God would enlarge his Coast*, or that Family Estate which was the Portion of his Inheritance; which denotes, that the Children of *Israel* were then in Possession of *Canaan*, when, according to God's Appointment, the Land was to be divided amongst them, as we read in the 33d Chapter of *Numbers*: *And ye shall divide the*
Land

The PRAYER of Jabez. 3

Land by Lot for an Inheritance among your Families, and to the more ye shall give the more Inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less Inheritance; every Man's Inheritance shall be in the Place where his Lot falleth; according to the Tribes of your Fathers ye shall inherit. And that Jabez lived before the Time of the Jews being govern'd by Judges appears from hence, that Othniel the Son of Kenaz, who was the first Judge of Israel, is mentioned after him as being a later Descendent of the Tribe of Judah. But these may seem rather critical Enquiries than useful Truths; I shall not therefore longer insist upon them, but proceed to consider my Text, as it does afford us a useful Lesson on the Nature of Prayer, which I shall briefly treat under these Four Heads:

First, The Duty,

Secondly, The Object,

Thirdly, The Matter or Subject, and,

Fourthly, The Efficacy of Prayer.

To begin with the *First*. That Prayer is a Duty we all owe to the Supreme Being, is a Truth which does not need the Support of any Arguments drawn from Revelation; a Proposition so plain and undeniable, as not to want the Testimony either of the Old or New Testament to prove or confirm it; the Voice of Nature does

universally proclaim it ; and there never was any Nation so miserably stupid and barbarous, as not to make Prayer and Supplication an essential Part of their Religious Worship, whatever mistaken Notions they might have concerning the Object of it. *Pliny*, a famous Heathen Writer, begins one of his Books * with this memorable *Exordium* ; “ It was the wise and laudable Custom “ of our Ancestors, to begin all their Undertak- “ ings with Prayer to the immortal Gods, as “ being persuaded, that without their Guidance “ and Help, they could not hope for Success “ upon their Endeavours.” Now if Heathens themselves, under those imperfect Scantlings of Knowledge, those Glimmerings of Light which Nature afforded them, thought it their indispensable Duty to address themselves to their supposed Deities for their Succour and Protection ; under how much greater Obligations lies the Christian, to offer up his Prayers and Petitions to the True God, who has vouchsafed him so much clearer Manifestations of Himself, and by such miraculous Methods display’d both his Power and Goodness in the Care and Preservation of his immortal Soul ! But why need I urge any Motives of Gratitude for our honouring God with our Prayers or Praises ? seeing our very Needs and

* *Plin. Panegy.*

The PRAYER of Jabez.

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Necessities make all Performances of this Kind to be our Interest as well as Duty. We are insufficient of ourselves to help ourselves, and so wholly dependent are we on Almighty God, that were he but to intermit his Act of Preservation of us, we should return to our primitive nothing, and all our Thoughts would perish, *for in Him we live and move and have our Being* *. And as the Concurrence of his Will is necessary to our Existence, so do we in all our Affairs need the Direction, Assistance, and Blessing of our Lord, which he has graciously promised to give us, on Condition that we apply to him in Faith and fervent Prayer †; but if we will not ask, we must not expect to obtain; if we will not seek, we must not hope to find: For though our good and gracious God *is nigh unto all them that call upon him*, and ready to bestow upon his Children such good Things as are needful for them, yet he will not obtrude and force his Benefits upon us: If we are so proud, and self-sufficient in our own Eyes, as to think it beneath us to stand indebted to him, or that we can do without him, saying, in the Words of the ungodly, *Who is the Lord that we should obey him, or the Almighty that we should call upon him?* If, I say, we are resolv'd to live as without God in the World, as if we

* Acts xvii. 28.

† James i. 5, 6.

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* Acts xvii. 28.

† James i. 5, 6.

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had nothing to ask of him, or to fear from him, what can we expect but that he will leave us to ourselves, that his Providence will desert its Charge, and his Holy Spirit depart from us? And under such a Dereliction, what will be the Consequence but that we *perish through our own vain Imaginations*, and fall a just Sacrifice to our sinful Presumption? And as the Fall of such a one will be deserved, so will it be unpitied: *The Righteous shall see it and fear, and shall laugh him to Scorn. Lo, this is the Man that took not God for his Strength, but trusted unto the Multitude of his Riches, and strengthen'd himself in his Wickedness* *. O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you †.

But, *Secondly*, As Prayer is a Duty necessarily resulting from the Constitution of our Nature, as being weak indigent Creatures, who stand in need of many Things which all our Wisdom and Power cannot procure for us, and expos'd to many Evils and Dangers which all our Caution and Circumspection cannot secure us from, so is it no less our Duty to make God alone the Object of our Prayers, since he has, upon numberless Accounts, the sole and undoubted Right both to this and all other Parts of our Religious Worship.

* Psalm lii. 7, 8.

† Psalm l. 22.

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We are told in the Text: That Jabez *prayed unto the God of Israel*: Which Expression, by the Way, does not import, as tho' there were any other God besides the God of *Israel*; for those whom the Heathens worshipped, being Wood and Stone and the Work of Mens Hands, were really and truly no Gods; nor does it yet imply that the God of *Israel* was not the God of all other People and Nations, for he was not only the God of the *Jews* but also of the *Gentiles*. He is the universal Lord, and Father of the World, and the sole Author and Giver of all good Things; but the Children of *Israel* being at that Time the only Church of God, and those to whom he bore a peculiar Relation, as having *chosen them to be a special People unto himself, above all People that were upon the Face of the Earth* *; promis'd to make them *high above all Nations in Praise, and in Name, and in Honour* †; and having, by many signal Demonstrations of Favour and Mercy, confirm'd to them the Performance of his Covenant and Promise, he is upon these Accounts called in Scripture the God of *Israel*, an Appellation which ought to fix in our Minds the Remembrance of his infinite Power and Goodness so remarkably display'd in the Deliverance and Preservation of that People, as

* Deut. vii. 6.

† Deut. xxvi. 19.

also in those inestimable Blessings convey'd thro' them to all future Generations in the Person of the *Messiah*, and that better Covenant of which he was the Author and Mediator. By this Expression then, that *Jabez prayed to the God of Israel*, we are to understand, that *Jabez* was a Worshipper of the True God, and did wisely as well as piously direct his Petitions to him, who was alone capable of hearing and crowning them with Success, and not one of those rebellious *Israelites* who were infected with the Customs of the Nations among whom they sojourn'd, and had given themselves up to the Abomination of Idolatry: For however strange it may seem, that a People so highly favour'd of God as the *Jews* were, and providentially preserv'd and supported by a continu'd Series of Miracles for so long a Time, should be so unmindful of the wonderful Blessings and Deliverances they had receiv'd from his Hand, so forgetful of all his Benefits, as to renounce all Ties of Gratitude and Obedience to their so gracious Benefactor, I say, however strange and unaccountable such a Conduct may seem, yet it is no less true and certain that they did so; for no sooner had God planted them in the Land of *Canaan*, and driven out the Heathen from before them, (*for they gat not the Land in Possession through their own Sword, neither was it*
their

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*their own Arm that helped them) * but as we read in the 2d Chapter of Judges, they forsook the Lord God of their Fathers, which brought them out of the Land of Egypt, and followed other Gods, of the Gods of the People that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and served Baal and Ashtaroth, and provoked the Lord to Anger †.*

But to pursue this Point : That God alone is to be made the Object of our Prayers, appears from his divine Nature and Attributes. It is a Piece of Justice generally acknowledg'd, that all Beings should have a Regard pay'd to them, in Proportion to the Dignity of their Nature, the Benefits for which we are beholden to them, and the Jurisdiction they have over us : Now God Almighty does eminently challenge our Adoration upon all these Accounts.

First, As he is a God of infinite Perfections, Everlasting, without Beginning and without End ; Omnipresent, or that fills every Part of Space ; Omniscient, or that knows all Things ; and Omnipotent, or that can do all Things : These Attributes, we know, are essentially inherent in him, and in him alone, and incommunicable to any other Being whatever.

* Psalm xliv. 3.

† Judges ii. 12, 13.

Secondly, As he is our greatest Friend and Benefactor : Our Lives and Beings are the free Gift of his Goodness ; and whatever serves to the Necessities, Support, or Comfort of them, flows from the inexhaustible Fountain of his Bounty : But above all, his inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord *Jesus* Christ, is such an amazing Instance of his Mercy and tender Compassion towards us, as makes our very best Performances of Homage and Devotion fall infinitely short of the Blessings he has therein conferr'd upon us, and is abundantly sufficient to raise our Affections to the highest Pitch of Divine Love ; blessing God, and saying, in the Words of holy David, *praise the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me praise his holy Name ; praise the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits.* * But if neither of these Motives is of Weight enough to engage us to offer up our Prayers and Praises to so great and good a God as our God, sure,

Thirdly, The Consideration of his Authority and Jurisdiction will awe us into a Sense of this Duty ; for he has an absolute Right and Property in us, founded on nothing less than the

* Psalm ciii. 1, 2.

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Act of Creation ; and his Power can and will as evidently demonstrate itself in our Destruction, if we deny him the Honour due unto his Name. The first Commandment which God gave to the Children of *Israel* by *Moses* was, that they should have no other Gods but him, that is, that they should not pray or pay religious Worship to any Being, or the Representation of any Being, but to him only ; and to guard them as much as possible against the Sin of Idolatry, they were forbid to represent the Divine Majesty under any Symbol, Emblem, or Resemblance whatever. *Take heed unto yourselves (for ye saw no Manner of Similitude in the Day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the Fire) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven Image, the Similitude of any Figure, the Likeness of Male or Female* *. What shall we say then of those abominable Practices of the Church of *Rome*, of kneeling, praying, and even prostrating themselves before Images, and of offering up Incense and Gifts to them ; or what can be constru'd greater Disobedience to the express Command of God, than such a Worship as this ? Nor will it avail them to say, that their Worship does not terminate in the Image, but in the Person it represents, for thus much the very Heathens had to plead in

* Deut. iv. 15, 16:

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Defence of Idol Worship, since the most ignorant of them could never be so sottish and stupid as to suppose that Wood and Stone were the very Gods whose Favours they implor'd, and whose Anger they deprecated. But it may be said, that the Case is very different, for that the Heathens worshipped Images of false Gods, whereas the *Romans* worship the Image of the true one. To which be it reply'd, that though the Case is different in that Circumstance, yet the Sin is as great, because God Almighty has as expressly forbid the worshipping of any Image, even that of the True God, in the Second Commandment, as he has forbid the worshipping more Gods than One in the First Commandment; so that let them pretend what they will, Idol-Worship will still be Idolatry, and we know, that Idolatry is Disobedience to God's Command. I cannot here pass by another Article of Accusation which the *Romanists* stand justly charg'd with, no less derogatory to the Honour of God, and contrary to the Sense and Purport of the Gospel than the former, I mean, their invoking and praying to the Virgin *Mary* and Saints departed, thereby admitting other Beings into a Partnership of Worship with the Divine Majesty, and paying that Adoration to the Creature which is only due to the Creator; a Practice, which, as it is neither supported by Reason, nor warranted by any sufficient Authority, so is it contrary to the Command

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mand of God, and to the Doctrine, and constant Usage of the primitive Church, all which do concur in appropriating Religious Worship to God alone. When St. *John*, through excessive Fear and Astonishment, fell down at the Angel's Feet to worship him, he was forbid in the following Manner: *See thou do it not*, says he, *I am thy fellow Servant, and of thy Brethren, that have the Testimony of Jesus: Worship God* *. And sure we may be, that if the Saints and holy Angels in Heaven are conscious of those fulsome Prostitutions of Homage which are paid them by some Men here on Earth, they do reject them with Abhorrence and Detestation, and with a Sort of Resentment hear their Names made accessory to the Profanation of one of the most sacred Offices of Religion: Nor is the invoking Saints and Angels, and thereby ascribing Divine Honour to them, a Practice more impious than it is foolish and ridiculous; for as we cannot be sure that they do hear us, so neither, if they do, can we be sure that it is in their Power to give us what we pray for: This however is certain, that as they cannot see into the Disposition of the Mind, and the secret Purpose of the Heart, (for this is a Prerogative peculiar to God) so consequently they must be very incompetent Judges of the respective Merits and Demerits of their

* Revelations xix. 10.

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Supplicants, and also whether the Success of their Prayers wou'd, in the End, prove a Blessing or a Curse. It is alledged, indeed, by those of that Communion I am speaking of, that their Invocation of Saints and Angels, and Prayers to them, are only design'd to conciliate their Interest and Intercession with God for them, and that this instead of being charg'd upon them as an Infringement of his Honour, and a Violation of his Command, ought rather to be accounted an Argument of their great Humility, proceeding from a Sense of their Unworthyness to address the tremendous Majesty of Heaven with their immediate Supplications. But however plausible this Pretence may seem, it will in no wise serve their Turn, or rectify the Obliquity of such a Proceeding: Let us hear what *St. Paul* says of this Matter to the *Colossians*, to whom he gives the following Caution: *Let no Man beguile you of your Reward in a voluntary Humility, and worshipping of Angels, intruding into those Things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly Mind; and not holding the Head* *; Now what can be more clear and express against the Practice we are speaking of than these Words? wherein the Apostle styles it, *a voluntary Humility*, i. e. such a one as is no where commanded or expected of us, but of our own putting on; and not only so, but he

* Colossians ii. 18, 19.

also shews the fatal Consequence of it, which he declares to be nothing less than the robbing us of our Reward, that Reward which is promis'd to our Christian Obedience and Worship of God in the Manner he has commanded: He calls those Men which do such Things (meaning the *Gnostics*, in all Probability, who maintain'd several Doctrines relating to the Nature and Worship of Angels) Intruders *into those Things* which they have not seen, *i. e.* prying, searching into, and pronouncing of Matters concerning which they have had no Revelation or Knowledge: He says of them, that they were vain, *vainly puffed up by their fleshy Mind*; *i. e.* that notwithstanding their Pretence and Shew of Humility, which was but feigned, they pleas'd and prided themselves in these their foolish Imaginations, and only borrow'd the Cloak of Humility, to make themselves appear more wise and holy than others, as was the Custom of the *Pharisees*. And, lastly, *St. Paul* calls this Practice a *not holding the Head*, *i. e.* that those who follow'd Angel-Worship, did in a Manner disclaim Christ, who, as he is the Head of the Church, and the Fountain of all heavenly Graces, has an undoubted Right to our immediate Service, and does expect that we should apply to him in Person: Hence I think it is very plain, that such a *voluntary Humility* as the *Gnostics* of old, and the *Roman Catholicks* at this Day pretend to, cannot be admitted as an
Excuse

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Excuse for a Doctrine and Practice which stands forbidden and condemn'd by God himself: Nor yet can any Unworthyness in ourselves be pleaded as a Justification in this Matter; for though we are unworthy to offer up our Petitions to God Almighty, and unworthy to have them answer'd, yet as he is pleas'd to accept our imperfect Devotions, and not only so, but commanded us to apply ourselves directly to him in all our Wants and Needs, it is not only an Act of Disobedience in us not to do it, but defeating the gracious Purposes of his Mercy towards us, who has said, *Call upon me in the Time of Trouble, so will I hear thee, and thou shalt Praise me* *. And holy David assures us, that *the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, yea all such as call upon him faithfully; he will fulfil the Desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their Cry and will help them* †. And our Blessed Saviour has in more Places than one promis'd us, that whatsoever we shall ask of the Father in his Name, and with proper Qualifications, it shall be given us. But farther; to make Saints and Angels our Advocates and Mediators, and to pray to them to pray to God for us, is offering an Affront to the Son of God, who, as Mediator betwixt God and Man, has undertaken to make Intercession for us, and to

* Psalm l. 15.

† Psalm cxlv. 18, 19.

plead his Merits in our behalf, for the obtaining those Blessings and Mercies which we stand in need of. To court therefore the Mediation of Saints and Angels is in Effect to suppose either that Christ is unwilling to employ his for us, or that it is insufficient of itself, in Contradiction to the express Testimony of Scripture, which tells us, that *he is both able and willing to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them* *.

Let what has been said suffice to shew the Impiety and Absurdity of the Practice of the Church of Rome in this Particular, and to make us hold in utter Detestation a Doctrine, as well repugnant to the reveal'd Will of God, as to the best Reason of Mankind, and the constant Usage of the Primitive Church.

Come we, *Thirdly*, to the Matter or Subject of Prayer. And this takes in a very large Scope, even every Thing that is necessary to the Support and Comfort of our Lives; all that our Wants, either spiritual or temporal, may crave, and, in short, whatever is needful, both for our Souls and Bodies. And this naturally leads me to consider the particular Prayer of *Jabez* in the Text, which divides itself into three Petitions.

* Hebrews vii. 25.

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First, That God would *enlarge his Coast*, or increase his Portion of Land, for the better Maintenance and Support of himself and his Family, which probably might be very numerous, and that Division of Ground which fell to his Lot, too scanty a Provision for them.

To request at God's Hand those Things which are necessary or convenient for ourselves, and those that depend upon us, is not only allowable but our bounden Duty; and however we are forbid in Scripture to forecast for the Morrow, and to take any Thought about *what we shall eat, or drink, or wherewithal we shall be cloathed*, yet no more is or can be meant by these and the like Expressions, than an over Fondness and Sollicitude for the Things of this Life, and attending to our temporal Wants above Measure, whilst we neglect those higher ones of a spiritual Nature, and which ought to be our first and more immediate Concern; but that we are not to be quite careless about the former, nor to exclude them from all Share in our Prayers, is plain from the Command of our Blessed Saviour, who, in the Prayer which he himself hath taught us, directs us to petition for *our daily Bread*, by which we mean a competent Provision of all those Necessaries which our Nature requires. Nor did St. *Paul* so interpret the foregoing Expressions, as if they were design'd to supersede the Necessity of our own Endeavours to procure them, for he wrought

wrought with his Hands to supply his Wants, and to keep himself from becoming chargeable to the Church, not presumptuously relying on a miraculous Interposition of God's Power for those Succours which were attainable in the ordinary Course of his Providence, by his own Care and Industry: Much less are we to expect that God Almighty should feed us as he did the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, or *Elijah* by the Brook; this would be tempting God in a very criminal Manner; for as, on the one Hand, we are not to distrust his Mercy and Goodness, so neither are we, on the other, to presume on his Providence to the Neglect of such natural Means, and prudential Methods as might of themselves answer the Purposes of our Preservation and Well-being. Thus much then is only requir'd of us, that we suffer not temporal Concerns to take full Possession of our Minds to the Exclusion of such as are of a more excellent Nature; that we do not so busy ourselves about many Things, as to forget the one Thing needful; and, in a Word, that we be not over-intent and anxious in making Provision for the Flesh, and at the same Time quite regardless as to what shall become of our precious and immortal Souls.

The *Second* Petition which *Jabez* offers up to Almighty God is, *that his Hand might be with him*, or that he would take him under his Guidance and Direction, and prosper his Endeavours

vours to a happy and successful Issue. A true Portrait this of an humble and devout Soul, breathing out its pious Acknowledgment of the divine Power and Wisdom, and commending itself and its Affairs to the Hands of God and his good Providence, agreeably to the Advice of the wise Man: *Acknowledge the Lord in all thy Ways and he shall direct thy Paths* *. How contrary to this is that self Confidence we see in most Men, that presumptuous relying on themselves and their own Abilities in the Prosecution of their Affairs, as if the Race was always to the Swift and the Battle to the Strong, not considering, that it is God who *putteth down one, and setteth up another* †; and that he *hath chosen the foolish Things of the World to confound the Wise, and the weak Things of the World to confound the Things which are Mighty, that no Flesh should glory in his Presence* §. When we see the Generality of Men so busily employ'd in projecting for Years yet to come, and laying down Schemes whose Accomplishment or overthrow lies conceal'd within the dark Womb of Futurity, and all this without once thinking upon God, *in whose Hand is our Breath, and whose are all our Ways* ||; I say, when we see Men engag'd in such Pursuits, as though they had taken a Lease

* Proverbs iii. 6.

† Psalm lxxv. 8.

§ 1 Cor. i. 27, 29

|| Daniel v. 23.

of Life, and had an authentick Copy of their appointed Time, can we forbear applying those Words of St. James, which he directs to such confident Projectors? *Go to now, ye that say, to Day or to Morrow we will go into such a City, and continue there a Year, and buy and sell, and get Gain, &c. For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will we shall live, and do this or that* *. We may plot and forecast, and build up great Expectations upon the vain Conceit of our own Wisdom, and fancy'd Sufficiency; but we should do well to consider, that *the Way of Man is not in himself, it is not in Man that walketh to direct his Steps* † aright; and that, as the Wise Man says, *the Heart of Man deviseth its Way, yet the Lord directeth his Steps* §. Would we but with pious Jabez reflect upon our own Insufficiency, trusting in the God of Heaven and not in *the Arm of Flesh*; would we but consult him in all our Undertakings, and put ourselves under his Conduct and Protection; what Blessings might we not expect upon the Works of our Hands! what Comfort and Support under the worst of Difficulties and Disappointments! knowing that whether our Pursuits have succeeded to our Wishes or not, yet whatever befalls us, will in the End be for the best; being assur'd, *that all*

* James iv. 13, &c.

† Jeremiah x. 23.

§ Proverbs xvi. 9.

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Things work together for good to them that love God *. But if we will set the Lord of Heaven at Defiance, neither courting his Favour, nor fearing his Displeasure; if we will *sacrifice to our own Net*, and say in the Words of the ungodly, *my Power and the Might of my Hand hath gotten me this*, or shall get it for me; then must we expect that God will oppose us in our several Pretensions, and that he who is a jealous God, jealous of his Honour and his Name, will severely animadvert upon such bold Contemners of it, and that our Neglect of his Mercy, Contempt of his Power, and Disregard of his Friendship, will whet the Sword of his Justice with double Keenness to cut off all such Rebels to his Government.

The *Third* Petition which *Jabez* offers up to God in this Prayer is, *that he would keep him from Evil, that it might not grieve him*. By *Evil* here is meant any Calamity or Affliction, which, in the ordinary Dispensations of God's Providence, may often fall to the Lot of the Good as well as the Bad, alike to the Righteous and the Sinner, though for different Ends and Purposes. Now it was not the Request of the good Man in the Text, that God Almighty would be so partial in his Favour, as to exempt him from all

* Rom. viii. 28.

Share of Trouble and Affliction, that he would, as it were, *make a Hedge about him*, to fence him against all Losses or Crosses of any Kind whatever: This would be a Prayer in no wise proper to be made to God, who does sometimes, for our good, visit us with his Fatherly Corrections, either for the Tryal of our Patience, and to *perfect us through Sufferings*, or for an Example to others, or some other wise and good Reasons; nay, we are told, that his paternal Castigation of good Men is an Argument of his Love and Affection for them, *for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and correcteth every Son whom he receiveth**: But Jabez prays unto God, *that he would keep him from Evil, that it might not grieve him*, i. e. that whatever Misfortunes or Troubles should befall him, they might not so far afflict him, as to overwhelm him, to drive him into Despair, or put him upon casting any unworthy Reflections upon God and his Providence; he begs of God to enable him to go through whatever Tryals he might lay him under, with Courage and Constancy; that, like Job, he might preserve his Integrity to the last, or that, like St. Paul, though *troubled on every Side*, he might not be *distressed*; though *perplexed*, yet *not in Despair*; though *persecuted*, yet *not forsaken*; though *cast down*, yet *not destroyed*. This is the Meaning of

* Hebrews xii. 6;

the pious Ejaculation which he sends up to Heaven, setting us an Example highly deserving our Imitation: Would we, when under the Rod of Affliction, thus apply ourselves to God for the Succour of his Grace to strengthen and support us under it, we should surely find a successful Event of our Devotions, and, amidst the sorest Distresses of the present Season, (under the gracious Influence of his blessed Spirit) enjoy great Peace and Serenity of Mind, and be able to say, in the Words of the Psalmist, *In the Multitude of the Sorrows that I had in my Heart, thy Comforts have refreshed my Soul* *. We should not then, as we generally do, murmur and repine at God's Administration of Affairs, when any Thing happens to cross our Expectations or Desires, thinking ourselves hardly dealt with, and crying out in the Words of the Prophet, *Behold and see, if there be any Sorrow like unto my Sorrow* † ! We should not then question God's Vigilance or his Goodness, saying, *up Lord, why sleepest thou* § ? or, *hath God forgotten to be gracious, and will he shut up his loving-kindness in Displeasure* || ? But we should acquit the Lord of all unrighteous Dealing, acknowledging, that, *Justice and Judgment are the Habitation of his Seat* ‡, saying, *thy Way, O God is Holy* ** ; and confessing, that

* Psalm xciv. 19.

† Lam. i. 12.

§ Psalm xliv. 23.

|| Psalm lxxvii. 9.

‡ Ps. lxxxix. 14.

** Ps. lxxvii 13.

he

The PRAYER of Jabez. 25

he hath punished us less than our Iniquities have deserved * : Or else with Patience and Resignation of ourselves to his divine Will and Pleasure, feast on that comfortable Persuasion of the Apostle ; *Our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory ; while we look not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen ; for the Things which are seen are temporal, but the Things which are not seen are Eternal †.*

I come, *Fourthly*, to say something on the Efficacy of Prayer, which was the last Thing to be consider'd. It is said in the Conclusion of the Text, that *God granted him that which he requested.* That *Jabez* was a good Man, and had that proper Disposition of Mind, and Purity of Heart, with all other inward Qualifications necessary to render his Prayer an acceptable Sacrifice unto God, we have before shew'd by probable Argument ; and, indeed, were we lead into this Conjecture by nothing more than the Success of his Prayer, this of itself would be amply sufficient to warrant so favourable a Supposition ; for we are told, that the *Prayer of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord §* ; but that *his Ears are open to the Prayers of the Righteous ||.* We have

* Ezra ix. 13.

§ Prov. xv. 8.

† 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

|| Psalm xxxiv. 15.

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farther seen, that the Prayer itself is perfect in both the essential Requisites of Prayer ; in the Object of it, for he *prayed unto the God of Israel*, or True God ; and in the Subject, or Matter of it, for he prayed for those Things which we are not only allow'd but commanded to pray for : Well then might we expect to read in the Sequel, that he *found Favour in the Sight of God*, and obtained *that which he requested*.

Hence then may we derive Encouragement to expect Success upon our Petitions and Devotions, if they proceed from a Heart rightly inflam'd with a true Love and Affection for him to whom it is our Duty to pay them, if they be attended with that Sincerity of Mind, and Holiness of Life, without which *no Man shall see the Lord* ; yea, with double Confidence may we offer up our Prayers and Supplications to the Throne of Grace, and with double Assurance expect God's Blessing upon them, who have no less Mediator than the Son of God to back them, and to join his Merits and Intercession along with them.

We read of many Instances in the Old Testament, of the wonderful Prevalence of Prayer, whether in conciliating the divine Favour, or averting his Anger ; in procuring Blessings or escaping Curses ; in saving or destroying ; in calling down Judgments from Heaven on the Heads of wicked Offenders, or in staying the
uplifted

The PRAYER of Jabez. 27

uplifted Arm of God, when ready to hurl down Vengeance upon them : Nor are the Prayers of the Faithful, in the Name, and under the Mediation of *Jesus Christ*, less powerful now than they were under the Law ; nay, the Advantage is eminently on our Side : They could seldom obtain more by Prayer than some temporal Blessings or Deliverances, but we can obtain Spiritual and Eternal ones : They, by Virtue thereof, could conquer their Enemies to get Possession of an earthly Kingdom ; we, those that War against the Soul, to inherit a Celestial one. Did *Moses*, by praying to God, fetch down Manna from Heaven, to feed the *Israelites* in the Wilderness ? We, by doing the same, can repast our immortal Souls with the Bread of Life : Did he make Water spring from the solid Rock to quench their Thirst ? We can draw at the Fountain of Living Water, to quench the Heat of Sin. Did *Joshua*, by Prayer, obtain that the Sun might stand still ? We, by the same, can prevail with the Son of God to stand our Friend, and plead our Cause at the Bar of Heaven. Did *Sampson*, by Prayer to God, slay thousands of the *Philistines* ? We, in like Manner, can bring under Subjection those Lusts and Passions which are our bitterest Enemies, and are continually plotting our Destruction. Did *Elijah*, by the Power of Prayer, call down Fire from Heaven to consume the Messengers of *Aba-*

ziah? We, by the same efficacious Means, can bring down the Holy Ghost into our Hearts to enlighten our Understandings, and inflame our Affections with an ardent Love of God. Did the *Ninevites*, by Prayer and Fasting, respite the Destruction which was denounc'd against them? Thus may we propitiate the offended Deity, and *flee from the Wrath to come*. Were *Shadrach, Meshach*, and *Abednego* preserv'd by Prayer to the True God in the midst of the fiery Furnace? The same will as certainly preserve us from the eternal burning of Hell-Fire. *Lastly*, Did *Daniel*, by Prayer, escape the Fury of the Lions? By that, may we also escape the Clutches of that roaring Lion the Devil, who goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.

I have now gone through all those Particulars I propos'd to consider, distinctly and in Order; as, *1st*, The Duty of Prayer; *2dly*, The Object; *3dly*, The Subject; And, *4thly*, The Efficacy of it; And shall conclude all with the following Exhortation.

Seeing then, my Brethren, that Prayer is a Duty we all owe to God, as well on Account of his infinite Perfections, as by Reason of our great Imperfections: Seeing we are so insufficient of *ourselves to help ourselves*, and so wholly dependent on God's Mercy and Goodness, that without them we must be miserable, at least, cannot be happy: Seeing, God Almighty has been graciously

ciouſly pleas'd to open to us a Way of ſuch friendly Intercourſe and Communication with himſelf, and put us into ſo eaſy a Method of obtaining Supplies of every Thing that is needful for us, and a Deliverance from every Thing that may be hurtful to us : Seeing we are ſo well aſſur'd of the Power and Efficacy of Prayer, and confirm'd in this Aſſurance by ſo many remarkable Inſtances of it : But above all, ſeeing we have a Mediator in Heaven, *Chriſt Jeſus*, to preſent and enforce our imperfect Petitions, *an High Prieſt that can be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities* *, and whoſe precious *Sacrifice of himſelf* does continually aſcend up before God for a *sweet-smelling Savour* †, to procure for us Pardon of our Sins, and to tranſact our Peace with Heaven : I ſay, having all theſe Advantages and Encouragements, *let us come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need* §. Having, Beloved, no leſs Motives than thoſe of the higheſt Obligation, Gratitude, and Intereſt, to incite us to the Performance of this Duty ; no leſs depending upon it, than both our temporal and eternal Happineſs, let us not *forſake the aſſembling of ourſelves together, as the Manner of ſome is* ||, but be conſtant in Prayer, both Publick and

* Hebrews iv. 15.

† Ephesians v. 2.

§ Heb. iv. 16.

|| Hebrews x. 25.

Private, *cleansing ourselves from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God **, and supplicating him in the Words of that excellent Collect of our Church :

Let thy merciful Ears, O Lord, be open to the Prayers of thy humble Servants ; and that they may obtain their Petitions, make them to ask such Things as shall please thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

* 2 Cor. vii. 1.





THE
DUTY and REWARD
OF
CHARITY.

1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy :

That they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; Laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life.



T. Paul, in this Chapter, lays down many Excellent Rules for the Observance of *Timothy* in the Discharge of his Ministerial Function ; and in the Text points out to him what Doctrines he should more particularly recommend to the Practice of his Hearers : Among other

other important Duties, he strictly enjoyns that of Charity, as very necessary to be press'd home to them, especially to those whom God had blest with an Abundance of the good Things of this Life: *Charge them, says he, that are rich in this World.*

In some of the preceding Verses of this Chapter, the Apostle takes Occasion to discountenance the Sin of Covetousness, and to shew the inconsiderable Value of worldly Riches, when plac'd in Competition with those more excellent Things, *Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Patience, Meekness*: And in the Charge before us, he commands *Timothy* to preach up two Duties to the Wealthy: *First*, That of Humility, *that they be not high-minded, nor put their Trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God.* *Secondly*, That of Charity, *that they do good, and that they be rich in good Works, &c.* employing their Abundance to the Relief of their necessitous Brethren, and in doing all the Good they can, both to the Souls and Bodies of their Fellow-Creatures. And, *Thirdly*, he shews them, That by such an Application of their Riches, like wise and good Stewards, to those good Ends and Purposes for which they were design'd, they may turn them greatly to their Advantage, and make them instrumental in obtaining for them an immortal Inheritance, and unperishable Riches in a better State.

To each of these Heads I shall speak distinctly and in Order; taking Occasion, by the Way, to apply myself particularly to the Consideration of that Branch of Charity which we are now met to promote and encourage.

To begin with the First Duty injoin'd by St. Paul in the Text, *viz.* Humility: And it is observable that the Apostle introduces it here with great Propriety, both with Regard to the Circumstance of Place and Person. He mentions it first, because it is natural for Humility to go before a true charitable Disposition, and it is also necessary to promote it. Pride is a great Enemy to this Christian Virtue, both, as it calls off our Attention from the Wants and Distresses of others, or rather fixes it entirely upon ourselves; and also as it choaks up those Seeds of Tenderness and Compassion which Nature has implanted in our Breasts. And the Apostle does with equal Propriety recommend it to the Rich, forasmuch as they have most Need of it, and are generally provided with the least Share of it; for of all the Devil's Baits and Engines which he so artfully manages to estrange Men from God and their Duty, and to bribe them into his own Service and Interest, there is none which he more successfully employs for that Purpose, than the Snare of Riches. Upon this Account probably it was, that our Saviour saith, *How hard is it for them that trust in Riches to enter into the*

Kingdom of God * ! And St. Paul, in the Chapter from whence the Text is taken : *They that will be rich fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition ; for the love of Money is the Root of all Evil* †. And Solomon, to the same Purpose, saith, *he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be Innocent* §. By all which Expressions is meant the great Difficulty, great almost to an Impossibility, of maintaining our Integrity, and keeping within the Bounds of our Duty, at the same Time that we are intent upon Worldly Acquisitions.

Thus much for the Propriety observable in St. Paul's introducing this Duty, with Regard to the Circumstances of Place and Person. Come we now to lay down some Arguments to enforce the Practice of it : And here we are supply'd with two very substantial Ones from the Text ; *First*, From the Uncertainty of Riches, *nor trust in uncertain Riches* : *Secondly*, From the Consideration of having receiv'd all that we enjoy from the free Bounty of God ; *but that they trust in the living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy*. The First of these denotes the extreme Folly of being high-minded, and priding our-

* Mark x. 24.

† 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

§ Prov. xxviii. 20,

selves on the Score of our Wealth; the latter argues the Ingratitude of such a Conduct.

That Riches are of an uncertain, fugitive Nature, I need not tell you: How often do they *make themselves Wings* (as the Wise Man elegantly expresses it) *and fly away, like as an Eagle towards Heaven* * ? But suppose them never so well secur'd to us from the Power of Accidents, and from the Fraud and Violence of Men, yet as Life itself is uncertain, we consequently hold them upon the same uncertain Tenure; at best, it cannot last long, and then we must infallibly part with them. Now to put our Trust in any Thing so precarious, not only in its own Nature, but also on Account of the Uncertainty of our Lives, does denote a very vain and senseless Confidence; and if we will thus pride ourselves in our fancy'd Sufficiency, like the rich Man in the Gospel, we shall render ourselves justly obnoxious to that unexpected Sentence pronounc'd against him: *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be requir'd of thee; then whose shall those Things be which thou hast provided* † ?

But, *Secondly*, When we reflect, that whatever we enjoy is the Gift of God, and the Product of his Goodness; that he is the Arbitrator and Lord

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

† Luke xii. 20.

of our Fortunes, we but Stewards under him; and accountable for the Misemployment of them: This Consideration should teach us to be Modest, Humble, and Thankful, not to *sacrifice to our Net, and burn Incense to our Drag*, (in the Phrase of *Habakkuk* *) as though Providence had no Hand in our Prosperity, nor we were at all beholden to it. We may, indeed, if we please, ascribe all our Success and Opulence to our own Art and Industry, our own Skill and Management; and when we have done that, fall down before the golden Calf that we have set up; but this is such monstrous Ingratitude as will most assuredly provoke God to turn our Blessings into Curses, and to make us acknowledge his Power under the Justice of our Punishment, who would not adore his Goodness in the Multitude of his Mercies. We shall do well therefore to consider the Fate of *Nebuchadnezzar*, before the Hand of the Lord inflicteth a Judgment on our Presumption, as it did upon his, and (by a woful Experience of the Truth of it) extort from us the same Confession; that *he doeth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth; and those that walk in Pride he is able to abase* †.

* Habakkuk i. 16.

† Daniel iv. 35, 37.

I shall add but one more Argument against High-mindedness under affluent Circumstances, which is this; that they are widely insufficient for our Happiness.

If we will but make a just Estimate of Things, and take off the Mask which vulgar Prejudice and popular Opinion has put on the Face of Riches, we shall find, that the Advantages which they yield their Possessors are trifling and inconsiderable: They cannot secure them from the common Accidents of Life, much less from bodily Infirmities, as Pain and Sickness; they do not exempt them from moral Obligations, nor set them free from the Restraints of Religion: Nay, is it not strictly true, on the contrary, that as they stand indebted to Heaven for larger Receipts of Favour, so their Talent of Duty is proportionably Increas'd, and that God Almighty expects, that their Improvements in Virtue and Religion should be equal to the Advantages and Opportunities afforded them to practice it? Let us carry on this Argument a little farther, under the View of Comparison. Look on the King and the Beggar as bidding their last adieu to the World, and say, What is the mighty Difference betwixt Majesty and Meanness? Will Kingdoms be accepted as a Ransom for Life? Will Crowns and Scepters bail the Monarch under the Arrest of Death? Will Beds of Down, or Canopies of State lull Conscience to Rest, or assuage the Pangs of

of the wealthy Sinner? Follow them to the dark Mansions of the Grave, and see them both laid low in the Dust, and from this mortifying Spectacle learn the Vanity of all human Greatness: Which is high, which is low? Which is rich, which is poor? Alas! fond Man, all such Distinction ceases in the Grave whither thou goest. Lend me your Imagination once more, and suppose them both plac'd before the dreadful Tribunal of the Great God: And here, what do we think shall be the Measure of his proceeding in their Favour or otherwise? According to their former Rank and Condition in this Life? That cannot be, for we are assur'd that he *accepteth not the Persons of Princes, nor regardeth the Rich more than the Poor; for they all are the Work of his Hands* *. What other Rule then may we suppose that he will proceed by, but that which he himself hath told us? That *he will render to every Man according to his Deeds, whether they be Good or Evil* †. The Question then put to us will not be, what was the Quality of our Persons, but the Quality of our Actions? Not, how rich, how powerful, how honourable we were? But, how charitable, how devout, how religious? And the Issues of Judgment will be for or against us according to the Verdict of our own Consciences on these grand Points of Enquiry.

* Job xxxiv. 19.

† Rom. ii. 6. 2 Cor. v. 10.

What has been said, may serve to humble the Pride of such as are apt to set too high a Value on themselves on Account of the Gifts of Fortune, or any other external Advantages; and to teach us both the Reasonableness of that Command of the Lord by the Prophet, and the Obligations we lie under to observe it: *Let not the wise Man glory in his Wisdom, neither let the mighty Man glory in his Might; let not the rich Man glory in his Riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me* *.

I pass on next to consider the *Second Duty* injoin'd in those Words of the Text: *That they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.* The Sense of which Words is evidently this; that they seek all Opportunities of being helpful and beneficent to their poor and needy Brethren, and of granting them such Supplies of Relief, according to their Abilities, as their Wants, whether spiritual or temporal, may call for. Now Charity is a Duty which derives its Origin from natural Obligation, and seems impress'd on the very Constitution of our Beings: And as it is a Quality peculiar to the human Race, it was first distinguish'd by the Name of Humanity, and is the same Vir-

* Jeremiah ix. 23, 24.

tue, under those higher Improvements it has receiv'd from our Religion, which we call Charity: I say, this Duty owes its Original to natural Obligation; and that it does so will appear upon these two Accounts.

First, From the mutual Need we have of one another's Assistance. It is certain, that there are none of God's Creatures born into the World under such Terms of Dependence on one another as we are: We came naked and defenceless from the Womb; and the slow Progress by which we advance to any tolerable Degree of Strength and Understanding, makes it impossible for us to provide ourselves with Raiment and Sustenance for a considerable Term of Years: Whereas all other Creatures are provided with a Covering and the Means of their Defence without any Care of their own, and are taught by natural Instinct to seek their Food, some immediately after they are brought forth, the Rest in a very short Time: Besides, when we are grown up, how insufficient are we of ourselves singly, to procure the Comforts, the Conveniences, nay, even all the Necessaries of Life? Add to this, that, if left alone, the Beasts of the Forest would be more than a Match for us; Nay, we should be under continual Apprehensions of Danger from one another: Thus cheerless and forlorn would our Condition be if left to ourselves, and not knit together by the Bonds of Society and friendly Offices,

fices, as if on Purpose to teach us, that we were not born for ourselves alone, but also for the Good of each other; and that we do most effectually advance our own private Happiness, by contributing our best Endeavours to promote that of the Publick.

But, *Secondly*, Charity or Beneficence does farther appear to be a Duty of natural Obligation, from those Impressions of Tenderneſs and Compaſſion which we feel in ourſelves, upon beholding the Miſeries and Diſtreſſes of our Fellow-Creatures: For, as there are no Miſfortunes in Life that we are not ſubject to as well as others, and which might not have chanc'd to be our Lot as well as theirs, it is natural for us to make their Caſe, in ſome Meaſure, our own, and to commiſerate thoſe unhappy Circumſtances of our Brethren, which the ſame common Nature, whereof we all partake, has not exempted any of us from; at leaſt, I am ſure it is ſo with every Perſon that has any Spark of Generoſity or good Nature left in him; and as for thoſe who have ſo far degenerated into Brutality as to divest themſelves of theſe Sentiments of Pity, they muſt have taken cruel Pains to efface the Image of God in their Souls, and I cannot help pronouncing of ſuch, that they are no better than Monſters in human Shape; they have harden'd their Hearts like the neither Mill-Stone, and are worſe than the unjuſt Judge in the Goſpel, *who neither fear-*

ed God, nor regarded Man * ; for he was prevail'd upon at length, by the Importunity of the poor Widow, to avenge her Cause ; but they are deaf to the most pressing Sollicitations of natural Distress, and have steel'd their Hearts in Uncharitableness.

If then it is thus natural to the Mind of Man, unbiass'd by any Prejudice of Education, and untainted by an utter Depravation of Morals, to have a sympathetick Feeling of the Miseries of others ; how shall we account for these inward Workings, this yearning of our Bowels towards our Fellow-Creatures under Circumstances of Distress but from hence ? That Nature has implanted in our Breasts these tender Uneasinesses, these gentle Throws of Compassion, on purpose to engage us to administer to their Necessities such Relief as we are able, and that as we weep with those that weep, so, by making their Hearts glad, we may rejoyce with them that rejoyce.

But farther ; our Obligation to this Duty of Charity does still more strongly appear from the Three following Considerations.

I. From the Dispensations of Providence ;

II. From the Express Command of God ;

* Luke xviii. 2.

III. From

III. from the Authority and Example of our Blessed Saviour.

And, *First*, From the Dispensations of God's Providence, by which, I mean, that unequal Distribution which he has made of the good Things of this Life, *dividing to every Man severally as he will*, to some a very large Share, to others a very scanty one; Nay, some there are that seem almost to have been forgot by Providence in the Distribution of its Favours, as being left destitute of the very Means of living. This seeming Partiality in God's Dealings has been thought so unaccountable by some careless Observers, as to have been improv'd into an Objection against his Providential Care of us; though it would be very easy to shew, that both God's Wisdom, and Goodness are hereby manifestly display'd; seeing this very Circumstance of the unequal Division of Things in this Life does yield us one of the strongest natural Arguments for the Certainty of a future State, when all these Inequalities shall be adjusted and made even: It is also the very Basis of Society and Government, which could not subsist without such a Subordination of Ranks and Classes in Mankind; and it also affords Men an Opportunity for the Exercise of various Virtues, which suit some with one Condition of Life, and some with another; to the Poor it affords a Tryal of their Patience and

Resignation to God's Providence ; to the Rich, the Means of practicing Humility, Moderation, and Charity : But the Inference I would draw from the Consideration before us, is this : That as God Almighty has made a sufficient Provision for all his Creatures, and not made it necessary that any one should perish ; and as we are all equally his Children, and alike dear to him, if not otherwise through our own Fault ; it was certainly the Design of his Providence, in the unequal Distribution of its Favours, that the Superfluities of the Rich should go to relieve the Necessities of the Indigent, and that the Abundance of the one should serve as a Supplement to the Wants of the other.

II. But, *Secondly*, the Duty of Charity derives a still stronger Obligation from the express Command of God, in his revealed Word, to which Purpose there is such a vast Variety of Texts, that I am almost at a Loss which to make choice of. I shall content myself under this Head with instancing in the following few out of the Old Testament. In *Leviticus* God commands thus : *When ye reap the Harvest of your Land, thou shalt not wholly reap the Corners of thy Field, neither shalt thou gather the Gleanings of thy Harvest ; and thou shalt not glean thy Vineyard, thou shalt leave them*

them for the Poor and the Stranger * ; and elsewhere ; *if thy Brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay, then thou shalt relieve him ; yea, tho' he be a Stranger, or a Sojourner* † . So likewise in the 25th Chapter of Deuteronomy ; *If there be among you a poor Man, of one of thy Brethren within any of thy Gates, thou shalt not harden thy Heart, nor shut thine Hand against thy poor Brother, but thou shalt open thine Hand wide unto him ; thou shalt surely give him, and thine Heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him* § . Nay, God Almighty does in many Places declare to the *Jews*, that he preferred Mercy and Charity to the Poor before any positive Duties of their Religion, tho' commanded by himself, and that without the former, neither their Fasts nor Sacrifices would find Acceptance in his Sight. *Is not this the Fast that I have chosen ?* says he, by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *Is it not to deal thy Bread to the Hungry, and that thou bring the Poor which are cast out, to thy House ; when thou seest the Naked that thou cover him ; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own Flesh* || ? And to the same Purpose, by the Prophet *Hosea* ; *I desired Mercy and not Sacrifice* ‡ . Let these Quotations suffice to shew, that Charity is a Duty expressly commanded by

* Levit. xix. 9, 10.

† Levit. xxv. 35.

§ Deut. vii. 8, 10.

|| *Isaiah* lviii. 6, 7.

‡ *Hosea* vi. 6.

God himself, and consequently does challenge our Observance under no less Penalty than that of incurring the Fierceness of his Anger, which will be severely executed on the Disobedient.

The *Third*, and last Argument with which I propos'd to enforce our Obligation to this Duty, was, The Authority and Example of our Blessed Saviour : And here, that I may not be tedious, by dwelling upon a Number of Proofs taken out of the Gospels, which will of themselves occur to your Memory on this Subject, I shall content myself with observing to you, that as Charity has receiv'd very great Improvements from our Saviour, both as to the Extent and Degree of it, so has he in many Places made it the chief Badge and Characteristick of his Religion; and has farther given us to understand, that the chief Enquiry insisted on at the last Day will be, how we have acquitted ourselves in this Particular; as in that very memorable Saying: *I was an hungred and ye gave me Meat, thirsty and ye gave me Drink, a Stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me* *, and so on: The Story of the Widow and her two Mites †: The Parable of *Dives* and *Lazarus* §; and that of the good *Samaritan* ||, are so many useful Lessons on Charity, and de-

* Mat. xxv. 35.

§ Luke xvi. 19.

† Mark xii. 42.

|| Luke x. 33.

sign'd for our Instruction and Imitation: But this Duty is still more beautifully and emphatically recommended to us in the Example of the Blessed *Jesus*, whose Character it was, that he *went about doing Good* *. It was the constant Business and Employment of his Life to seek out all Occasions of being helpful both to the Souls and Bodies of Men: To heal the Sick and Infirm, to instruct the Ignorant, to convince the Unbelieving, to confirm the Doubtful, and to raise the dejected and drooping Spirit; this he look'd upon as no less necessary to his Office and Character, than his ordinary Food was to the sustaining of his natural Life; and therefore he call'd it the *Meat* which he had to eat †. And we are told, that among the many wise and gracious Ends of our Saviour's unwearied Diligence in and Application to the great Business of Charity and Beneficence, this was one, that he might *leave us an Example that we should follow his Steps*, as he himself told his Disciples: *I have given you an Example that ye should do as I have done* §. We cannot, indeed, imitate this heavenly Pattern in the Manner of our Charity; we cannot heal confirm'd Diseases with a Word speaking, or feed a Thousand with a Handful of Bread: Such miraculous Relief could only be administ'rd

* Acts x. 38.

† John iv. 32.

§ John xiii. 15.

by him who was the Lord of Life, and to whom more than all the Powers of Nature were subservient: But thus much we can do, and more is not requir'd of us, we can be kind and helpful to our Fellow-Creatures in Proportion to the Abilities and Opportunities that are afforded us; and we can employ natural Means for their Preservation, Information, or Relief; we may instruct the Ignorant by our Counsel and Advice; we may Comfort the Sick by a charitable Visit, or a seasonable Supply of Medicines; we may save a whole Family from Ruin, and an honest Tradesman from a Gaol, by lending a Sum of Money till expected Succours come in, and they have Time to recover themselves: The Aged and infirm Poor, the unfortunate Person that is reduc'd by unavoidable Distresses, the willing Hand that wants Employment and an Opportunity of being Industrious, and the promising Youth struggling under Difficulties just in his Entrance into the World: These and many others are deserved Objects of our Compassion, and demand our Assistance: But there is still one other Occasion of Exercising your Charity, which I must more largely insist on, and which ought to engage your particular Attention at this Time. I need not tell you, that I mean that of supporting a Fund for the cloathing and educating poor Children, of taking under your Protection helpless Orphans, or such as may not improperly be termed

termed so with Regard to any Succour or Benefit of Education they are to expect from their poor Parents ; of bringing them up in the Fear and Knowledge of God ; and of putting them in a Way of getting a Livelyhood by their own honest Labour. And this is a Charity, in no respect inferior to any of the fore-mention'd, and, upon many Accounts, of a far more excellent Nature, as will appear from considering,

First, The Objects of this Charity !

Secondly, The beneficial Effects of it ; and,

Thirdly, The Evils which it has a natural Tendency to prevent.

And, *First*, The Objects of it are of all others the best intitled to our Charity, both on Account of their Innocence, and their Wants. There is not, perhaps, any Thing so apt to freeze the Current of Charity, as those numberless Frauds and Impositions that are daily practic'd in order to extort it from us, and which make even the best dispos'd People cautious how they bestow their Alms : But these poor harmless Children are free from the very Suspicion of any such Design, it is not Pretence but Reality, not an artful Story but Innocence and actual Distress that pleads for them, and demands our Help : Be-

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fides,

sides, were we never so sure, that the Wants and Necessities of others were real and unfeigned, yet we cannot be certain, that the Persons lying under them did not bring them upon themselves; their own Vices or Follies, their Imprudence or Misconduct might have a great Share in their Misfortunes; and though Charity always hopeth the best, where there is no manifest Proof of the contrary, yet it must be allow'd, that none have so indubitable a Right to our compassionate Relief as those who were in a Manner born Objects of it, and who, we are sure, became such, not through their own Fault, but by the Providence of God. Again, as their Wants are real, so are they the greatest that can be; for they are not only unprovided with the Means of procuring for themselves a temporal Subsistence, but also destitute of that *one Thing* most essentially *needful*, viz. Saving Knowledge. Now Knowledge is so necessary to a Christian, that without it no Act of Religion can be available to any Purpose of Salvation, and our loudest Prayers will be but as sounding Brass or a tinkling Cymbal; without Knowledge there can be no Spirit or Life in our Devotions, no warrantable Zeal for the Honour of God and his holy Worship. All Faith must be first grounded in some Knowledge of those Things which are the Objects of it, for without knowing any Thing of Christ, it is impossible that we should believe in him; without knowing
what

what he has done and suffer'd for our Sakes, we cannot have any true Love and Affection for him; and, in a Word, without first understanding what the Will of our Lord is, it cannot be suppos'd that we should practice it. Now what Want can be compar'd to that of being debarr'd the Knowledge of our chiefest Good and Happiness, and the Means of Working out our own Salvation? Better, far better had it been for these little ones never to have been born, than to be born to an unavoidable Ignorance of their God and Saviour, and their Duty to him; And far better would it have been for us likewise never to have been born, than to withhold from them that Instruction which is alone capable of making them wise unto Salvation, and of building them up in our holy Faith and Religion. Thus then you see, that your Charity to these poor Children is the greatest that can be; it is being Charitable to their Souls as well as Bodies, and Providing both for their temporal Maintenance here, and their eternal Happiness hereafter.

But, *Secondly*, This Charity is more excellent than any other in the beneficial Effects of it, whether we consider it with regard to temporal or spiritual Good: As to the first of these, it has the most extensive Influence that can be, for it is doing good to the whole Community; it is rearing up so many useful Members to the Socie-

ty whereunto we belong; employing so many Hands, which would otherwise be rather a Burden than Advantage to the Publick, in beneficial Trades and Occupations, and thereby giving a more flourishing Circulation to Traffick, and increasing the Opulence of the Nation, which is allow'd by all to be best promoted by an industrious Poor; a remarkable Instance of which we have in a neighbouring State, which, though small in Extent, and under great Disadvantages of Situation, and from the smallest Beginnings, is, by the meer Dint of Labour, and an industrious Application to Business in all its Members, become one of the wealthiest Nations in the World.

Again; the bringing up of poor Children, and putting them in a Way of subsisting themselves by their own Endeavours, does afford Matter of great Good to the Publick, as it oftentimes puts it in their Power to be helpful to others in their Turn, and induces them, from a Sense of Gratitude, to administer the same Relief to others which they, in like Circumstances, receiv'd themselves; *working with their Hands the Thing which is Good, that they may have to give to him that needeth*: But it does more especially conduce to the good of Society, as it enables them to provide for their own Children and Families, when they come to have them, and by that Means lessen the Number of Poor, ease the Pub-

Publick of a heavy Tax, and puts it in their Power to transmit down Bread to their Posterity upon lesser Terms of Dependence than they themselves first receiv'd it. So that your Charity convey'd in this Channel diffuses itself over future Generations, and Ages yet for to come will be water'd with the Dew of your Blessing.

But neither has this Charity a lesser Claim to Preference over any other, if we consider the beneficial Effects of it with regard to spiritual Concerns; for the genuine Fruits of this Institution are nothing less than the Propagation of Christianity, the enlarging the Borders of our *Sion*, and saving many Souls by bringing them within the Pale of our Church. We read in *Deuteronomy* *, that *Moses*, pursuant to the Commission he had receiv'd from God, not only commanded the People of *Israel* to observe themselves all the Statutes and Ordinances which God had given them, but also, that they should *teach their Children the same*: And sure the same Precept does more forcibly bind under the Gospel, by how much the Religion of *Christ* is more excellent than the *Mosaic* Institution. There is not any Work more Noble and Generous; more suitable to the Dignity of our Nature, more worthy the Care of every good Man, more benefi-

* *Deuteronomy* iv. 9, 10.

cial to Society, or more pleasing to the Deity, than that of advancing the Knowledge of God and his true Religion in the World; and therefore we cannot bestow sufficient Praises on that pious Undertaking which has been set on foot, and carried on of late Years, for raising a Fund for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge in Foreign Parts; but then, ought we not to be as Zealous to promote the same good Design at home? Shall we be more solicitous for the Souls of Heathens than for the Souls of those that are of our own Household? Shall we take the Bread of Life, and give it to Aliens and Foreigners, and deny our own Children the least Crumbs of spiritual Food? Shall we take great Pains to compass Sea and Land to make Profelytes abroad, and let those which are at our own Doors and within our own Gates perish for lack of Knowledge? This is acting with great Inconsistency, and subverting the Order of Charity, which ought to begin at Home. Let us not then so busy ourselves about many Things, as to neglect the one Thing primarily needful, nor be more intent on making Heathens *Christians* abroad, than on preventing *Christians* from turning Heathens at home: The latter does at least deserve an equal Share of our Labour and Charity, and a Neglect herein, will, in a great Measure, defeat the Success of our most diligent Endeavours after the former, forasmuch as we

cannot

cannot reasonably hope to gain any great Number of Converts among other Nations, whilst they see so little either of Christian Faith or Practice among many of our own: Let it then be our principal Concern to encourage and promote Religion at home, and to train up those that are already initiated into it by Baptism, in a persevering Course of Piety, that *when they are old they may not depart from it* *. Youth is the Seed-Time of Knowledge, and we must sow Instruction in their tender Years, if we look for any Harvest from them afterwards: We must plant them young *in the House of the Lord*, and then we may confidently hope, that when they are grown up, they will *flourish in the Courts of the House of our God* †.

But, *Thirdly*, another great Recommendation of this Charity, and which gives it the Preference to any other, is, the many Evils which it has a natural Tendency to prevent. What think we would be the Consequence of these poor Children being left to the wide World, free from all Restraints of a religious and virtuous Education; surrounded with Dangers they were not appriz'd of, and therefore more dangerous; assaulted by numerous Temptations, though un-

* Prov. xxii. 6.

† Psalm xcii. 12.

provided with the Means of withstanding any; invited by all the Allurements of sinful Pleasures, and prompted to them by the Instigations and Propensities of a corrupt Nature? Under such Circumstances of Disadvantage, what but a miraculous Interposition of the divine Protection could keep them from becoming a Prey to Satan, and from being lead *captive by him at his Will*? How easily is the unwary Youth seduc'd by evil Company, who make it their first Business to lay Siege to his Innocence and Modesty? He is then, by gradual Advances in Sin, lead on to the Commission of greater Crimes, till at length the Principle of Shame becomes extinct, and Vice grows habitual to him; thus he ripens by Degrees into a harden'd Sinner, and perpetrates the most daring Enormities without the least Remorse; and to compleat all, he turns Agent to Satan to factor Souls for Hell, and to train up others to be Children of Darkness like himself, and confederates with him in Wickedness. Now whence but from these cursed Schools of Iniquity, these diabolical Affociations, come Thefts, Robberies, Rapes, Murders, and all those crying Abominations which infest our Streets and Roads, and which cause so many unhappy Wretches to croud our Jayls and load our Gibbets? And what Way so effectual to prevent all these Mischiefs as the supporting Charity Schools for the Education and Employment of poor Children? Here they
imbibe

imbibe early Notions of their Duty to God and their Neighbour; here they are taught both the Deformity and Danger of Sin, are made to frequent the publick Service of the Church; and to hear the Word of God explain'd to them. This is laying a good Foundation whereon to build them up in the Faith of *Christ*, this is providing them with a Store of spiritual Armour and Ammunition, wherewith they may be able to withstand all the malicious Attempts of the great Enemy of their Souls, who *goeth about seeking whom he may devour*: And, which is none of the least Benefits of this Institution, they are here train'd up to Diligence, being employ'd at proper Times in such useful Labour as is suitable to their Years, or in performing such Exercises as the particular Discipline of the School requires; which, by the Way, is a very great Advantage to the Children, not only as it inures them to Labour, and fits them for Business, but as it serves to keep their Minds employ'd, engages their Attention, and thereby prevents many evil Thoughts and Communications which they would naturally give into if left in a State of Inactivity; for Idleness is the Bane and Ruin of Children, and if we do not keep them exercis'd in some useful or at least innocent Employment, the Devil will take Advantage of our Neglect, and set them at Work for us; "for the slothful and indolent" (as a learned Divine of our Church

very rightly observes *) “ lie in his Way, and
“ do, as it were offer themselves to his Service,
“ and having nothing to do, even tempt the
“ Devil himself to tempt them. ”

Thus have I consider'd, as far as the Compass
of this Discourse will permit, the Nature and
Excellency of this Charity; and hope, that what
I have said on this Head, with regard to the Pre-
ference due to it, is strictly conformable to Truth,
for I would not willingly exceed that to serve
any Purpose, even of Piety and Religion. But
before I dismiss this Point, I will beg your Pa-
tience to mention but one more Advantage, which
is almost peculiar to this as a publick Charity,
viz. that this is, perhaps, of all others the safest
Way of conveying your Charity, and which,
you may be sure, is apply'd to the Purposes you
design it : The Trustees and Managers of it are
generally of the Number of your own Friends
and Acquaintance, Men of Worth and Substance,
who are above making any little Advantage of
it, nay, who are equal Contributors to it with
yourselves, and are ready, when call'd upon, to
produce their Accompts and Disbursements, and
to satisfy you in every Particular relating to the
State of it. And this ought to be no small Sa-
tisfaction to you, to have the whole Trouble

* Dr. Tillotson, on the Education of Children.

taken off from yourselves, and to see your Contributions apply'd in the very same Way you intended they should. Which naturally leads me to remark the amazing Folly of those Persons who defer the Work of Charity till the Time of their Death, when they have so many fair Opportunities of bestowing it whilst they are in Health; for besides that this looks more like a Desire of commuting for Sins, than a Free-Will-Offering, rather a Thing extorted than given, they run the Hazard of a Misapplication, and withal debar themselves the great Pleasure of seeing the Fruits and good Effects of their Charity.

After what has been said on the Duty of Charity in general, and on this Branch of it in particular, it may seem needless to use many more Arguments in order to Excite in you a liberal Disposition towards these poor Children; and, indeed, I could almost prevail with myself to break off here, and to leave it to them to finish what I have begun, and plead the Remainder of their own Cause for themselves, in the silent Eloquence of their own Distress. Look at them, and tell me, if the very Sight of these poor Innocents, who now supplicate your Charity, and beg of you, for God and *Christ's* Sake, not to let them perish both here and hereafter, does not raise in your Breasts more sensible Emotions of Tenderness and Compassion than all that I have been

saying? But if there be any one among you so devoid of Bowels as not to be touch'd with so moving a Spectacle, let us pray to God for such a one, *That he will take away the stony Heart out of his Flesh, and will give him a Heart of Flesh.*

But I hasten briefly to lay before you two or three farther Motives to the Practice of this Duty, drawn from such Considerations as are almost universally allow'd to have the greatest Influence and Sway over us in our temporal Pursuits. The strongest Arguments drawn from Duty and Obligation do oftentimes prove ineffectual to excite our Obedience; and even Virtue itself never comes so well recommended to us, as when it carries something of temporal Reward with it *, either by gratifying our Thirst after Honour, administering to our Pleasure, or promoting our Interest. Now if it be made appear, that Charity can do all this, I believe, you will readily allow me, that it is the most desirable Thing in the World, and ought to be made our chiefest Aim.

First, then, let us see how Charity advances us to Honour: And this it does in a very distinguishing Manner, by conciliating to us the Favour

* ——— Quis enim Virtutem amplectitur ipsam
Præmia si tollas?

Juv. Sat. X.

and

and Friendship of God, who hath declar'd, in many Places of the Old Testament, the great Pleasure he taketh in the merciful Man. In the 58th Chapter of *Isaiah*, after having told the *Jews*, that he preferr'd Mercy to the Poor before Sacrifice; and after having enumerated some of those particular Acts of Charity in which he most delighted, he speaks to them in the singular Number, thus; *Then, i. e. if thou wilt be charitable in such Respects as I have mention'd, then shall thy Light break forth as the Morning, and thine Health shall spring forth speedily; thy Righteousness shall go before thee, and the Glory of the Lord shall be thy Reward* *. *Solomon* styles Charity to the Poor, *honouring the Lord with our Substance* †: And the Lord himself hath told us, that, *them that honour him he will honour* §. *Ye are my Friends*, says our Blessed Saviour, *if ye do whatsoever I command you* ||; and as he has commanded us to practice Charity more frequently than any other Virtue, it does undoubtedly qualify us for that most honourable Appellation. Nay, he has gone so far as to style the charitable Man his Benefactor; *inasmuch as ye have done it, viz. your Charity, unto one of the least of these, my Brethren, ye have done it unto me* ‡. If to bear a high

* *Isaiah* lviii. 8.

† *Proverbs* iii. 9.

§ *1 Sam.* ii. 30.

|| *John* xv. 14.

‡ *Matt.* xxv. 40.

Office or Commission under a Prince be deem'd honourable by the Sons of Men; how much greater Honour is it to bear the same under the great King of Kings? Now the charitable Man doth this, for he is Almoner to the most High God: Nay, I will venture to go much farther, and I have no less than Divine Authority for it; he is Creditor to the Almighty: For *he that hath Pity on the Poor lendeth unto the Lord* *.

But, Secondly, Charity does administer to our Pleasure, by which, I mean, rational Pleasure, and inward Satisfaction of Mind, which is the greatest of all Pleasures. God Almighty has, of his Goodness, so fram'd our Nature, and adapted it to that of our Duty, that the Practice of the latter does most effectually promote the Happiness of the former: All moral Duties, as well as Christian, when they become habitual, are attended with great Pleasure and Peace of Mind, but none with greater than that of Charity, and Beneficence, for this is to imitate God in one of his greatest and most amiable Perfections, *viz.* his Goodness in communicating Happiness to others. What Pleasure can compare with that of making glad the Hearts of our needy and afflicted Brethren, and to think, that the Mouths you have fed are daily invoking God to shower down his Blessings on the Heads of you

* Proverbs xix. 17.

their kind Benefactors? What Pleasure will it be, when you go to lie down in your Beds, to fix your Thoughts on this or that generous Action you have done, and with *Cornelius* to send up your Alms with your Prayers to the Throne of Grace, to plead for Pardon for your Sins? What a secret Complacency will arise in your Breasts on this Occasion? How will the Remembrance of your good Deeds refresh your Minds, add Sweetness to your Slumbers, and make your Bed a Bed of Rest indeed? But why need I point out to you the Pleasure of doing Good, a Pleasure which, I hope, you are all acquainted with, and which you can better feel than I describe; but if any of you have not yet felt it, let me desire of you to make the Experiment, it will not cost you much, and you have now an Opportunity before you; I will be bold to assure you, that you will never repent your Bargain, but find it the cheapest Purchase that ever you made in your Lives.

But if neither the Consideration of Honour nor of Pleasure will tempt you to be charitable, however, let that of Interest prevail with you to be so: And this was the third and last Motive I propos'd to make Use of for that Purpose. Would Time permit, I believe I could prove to you, that the supporting of Charity Schools is so far from being a constant Charge upon you, that it will in the End save you Money, for Example;

ample; The Poor of every Nation must be supported, either by voluntary Contributions, or by Rates and Assessments: Now it is certain, that the longer Time any Poor be left unemploy'd and unsupported, the greater will the Increase of Poor be in Proportion; and consequently the heavier must the Tax be for their Maintenance; whereas by making an early Provision for these poor Children, by bringing them up to Labour, and putting them out to useful Trades, you prevent, in a great Measure, the Increase of Poor from them, and thereby save yourselves the Excess of that after Charge which must otherwise necessarily fall upon you. Besides, as I observ'd before, the Riches of any Nation are greatly increas'd by the industrious Poor of it: Now the Riches of a Nation are manifestly the Riches of the several Individuals of that Nation, as they jointly constitute the Whole of it; and therefore it follows, by fair Inference, that you will be the richer for training up the Children of the Poor to Industry; the Fruits of their Labour will abundantly compensate for the Charge of their Education; and your own Money will, through a thousand imperceptible Channels, return to you again with double Usury. So that, upon the Whole, Self Interest leads you to lend Relief to these poor Children; and I need not desire you to be charitable to them for their Sakes, or for God's Sake, for it is for your own Sakes, and
for

for your own Advantage. But what is, at least ought to be, a still more forcible Inducement to your Charity, it is for the Interest of your precious and immortal Souls; it is, as the Apostle speaks in the Text, *laying up in Store a good Foundation against the Time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal Life*. And a greater than St. Paul has assur'd us, that, *blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy* *. And here I cannot but remark, how easy a Condition of Salvation this is, which only requires of us to do that which our Nature and common Humanity prompts us to; and which we, in like Circumstances, should desire and expect. Which only demands of us that which we do not want, and even that with a Promise, that we shall be repaid more than an Equivalent, not only in the next Life, but also in this. *Honour the Lord with thy Substance, and the first Fruits of thine Increase; so shall thy Barns be filled with Plenty, and thy Presses shall burst out with new Wine* †. And, indeed, we have abundant Reason to think, both from the Scripture, and common Observation, that the charitable Man is more immediately under the Care and Protection of the Divine Providence than any other, and that his Success in the World, whether we consider him in his Fortune, or in

* Matthew v. 7.

† Proverbs iii. 9, 10.

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his Family, is generally greater. So that, if we believe a God and his Providence; if Religion be not all a Cheat, and Heaven and Hell a Fiction, and in short, if we have any Regard either to our temporal or eternal Interest, we lie under all possible Obligations to this Duty of Charity.

But I am afraid I have by this almost tir'd your Patience, and shall therefore conclude with a Word of Application: And first to you that are rich, and are bless'd with an Abundance of the good Things of this World; and you are they whom the Apostle principally points at in the Words of the Text, *Charge them that are rich*, says he; and, indeed, the Command is so very reasonable that I need not tell you, that it is your Duty to give largely, for Sparingness in you upon these Occasions is as bad as giving nothing in those of more moderate Fortunes. But why need I be thus importunate with you? It is no great Matter that we ask of you, we do not desire you so to communicate as the First Christians did, to bring all your Wealth, and to fling it into the common Stock*; nor yet, like *Zacheus*, to give *Half of your Goods to the Poor*†; a small Matter, a very small Matter, in Comparison of what you enjoy, will content us; but you must take Care that it be not too small, for,

* Acts iv.

† Luke xix. 8.

if *thou hast much*, thou must give *plenteously*. But if after all that has been said, I cannot prevail with you to give your Charity, I will however give you mine, *i. e.* I will pray to God to forgive you; tho' I am afraid, there is but little Room to expect that he will, after so plain a Declaration as that made by St. *John*: *Whoso hath this World's Good, and seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth up the Bowels of his Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him* *? As if he had said, he that seeth his Brother want, and will not afford him that Relief which he is able to do, does in vain think that he loves God, and as vainly hopes that God loves him.

And as to you who are in more narrow Circumstances, we do not require of you, that you should imitate the poor Widow in the Gospel, by *casting in all your Living* †; nor yet that you should give as largely as those who are in more plentiful Circumstances; but yet you may give something even out of your Necessity: If *thou hast little, do thy Diligence gladly to give of that little, for so gatherest thou thyself a good Reward in the Day of Necessity* §. The little that thou givest will sanctify and give a Blessing to the little that is left; and trust in the Lord, he will increase thy Store.

* 1 John iii. 17.

† Mark xii. 44.

§ Tobit iv. 8, 9.

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I shall now end this long Discourse, with hoping, that I have not been preaching all this Time in vain, and that I shall have the Pleasure of finding, that, in Obedience to the Apostle's Command, you are *ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

I shall sum up all in that Excellent Collect of our Church :

O Lord, who hast taught us, that all our Doings without Charity are nothing worth ; send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our Hearts that most excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace and of all Virtues ; without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee, Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ his Sake. Amen.

F I N I S.



